MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Section 10
Infrastructure

INFRASTRUCTURE

10.1 Infrastructure is a vital component of the Local Plan as it is essential for a place to function well. Infrastructure planning is a key requirement of Government planning policy. To ensure that existing and new residents/businesses benefit from the growth that will be delivered in Medway over the plan period it is important that infrastructure is delivered in support of new developments in a timely fashion and in appropriate locations.

10.2 Infrastructure investment is fundamental to Medway's development over the plan period. The council understands that the significant projected increases in the number of people who will live, work, and study in Medway and visit the area have major implications for services and infrastructure. Steps need to be taken to ensure these needs are built into planning development.

10.3 This section considers the level of provision that may be required in association with Medway's projected growth. More information will be provided when the draft Local Plan is published for consultation with details on proposed development locations.

10.4 Medway Council has undertaken research to determine the existing condition of infrastructure, and to assess its quality and capacity and its ability to meet forecast demands. Further details of this work are set out within the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule that accompanies this consultation document and highlights the existing needs within Medway.

10.5 Infrastructure provision and projects often cover large geographical areas. In preparing the new Local Plan, the council is taking account of the need for strategic infrastructure including nationally significant infrastructure within the area. Medway has strategic importance for the supply of energy for the wider region. There are emerging strategic projects within the wider south east region that may have serious implications for Medway's infrastructure provision, for example the proposed Lower Thames Crossing and Ebbsfleet Garden City. National policy & legislation recognises the importance of coordinating planning for such strategic projects, including through the Duty to Cooperate.

Policy Approach: Infrastructure

General Infrastructure

Development must be supported by the provision of on and off site infrastructure, services and facilities that are identified to meet the needs arising from new development.

Planning permission will be granted for developments where the infrastructure and services (including that set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)), required to meet the needs of the new development and/or mitigate the impact of the new development is either already in place or will be provided to an agreed timescale. Infrastructure and services required as a consequence of development and provision for their maintenance, will be sought from developers and secured through developer contributions, by conditions attached to a planning permission, and/or other agreement, levy or undertaking, all to be agreed before planning permission is granted.

Strategic Infrastructure

The Council shall engage constructively in strategic planning matters that have the potential to impact on Medway, in order to meet the Duty to Cooperate with the aim of achieving effective coordination of planning. The Council will engage with the bodies prescribed in national policy and legislation and those perceived as 'relevant' dependent on the strategic matter under consideration.

Education

10.6 As a unitary authority, Medway Council is a Local Education Authority. Within Medway there are 35 day nurseries, 60 pre-schools, 78 primary schools and 20 secondary schools as well as further education and university provision. Boosting educational attainment and qualifications and skills levels in Medway from their position below the Kent and regional averages is a core priority, as this underpins the area's economic performance and opens up greater job and social opportunities for residents. The Local Plan can help in these ambitions, by supporting the provision of nurseries and schools and the development of the higher and further education sector.

10.7 A learning quarter of further and higher education has been established in the Chatham Maritime area, with the Universities at Medway, Mid Kent College and the University Technical College. These have a major social and economic impact on the area and are set to expand further over the plan period.

10.8 In recent years education provision has become more decentralised with the introduction of academies and free schools. This has been supported by flexibility within the planning system through new permitted development rights for buildings to more easily change use for education purposes.[15] National policy in the NPPF

[15] The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

encourages educational development that is sustainably located and accessible to communities.

10.9 The council's education planning team has identified that there is currently limited capacity for additional school places and new facilities are needed across all ages within the authority area. Therefore any additional residential development would be expected to contribute to an expansion of existing educational facilities or the development of new facilities, to address the increase in demand. In planning for new schools and nurseries, there are opportunities to consider the co-location of wider community services and shared use of facilities such as sports fields.

10.10 Responses received from the Issues and Options consultation in early 2016 indicated that education provision should be provided in new developments and that if new developments do not provide a facility physically then they should contribute financially.

Policy Approach: Education

Early Years and School Provision

Medway Council supports the expansion or provision of new/existing educational facilities within the authority area to deliver sustainable development, and to meet identified need.

New residential development proposals of a significant scale should seek to provide educational facilities within their development where suitable. This will support the development of balanced communities and inform quality place-making.

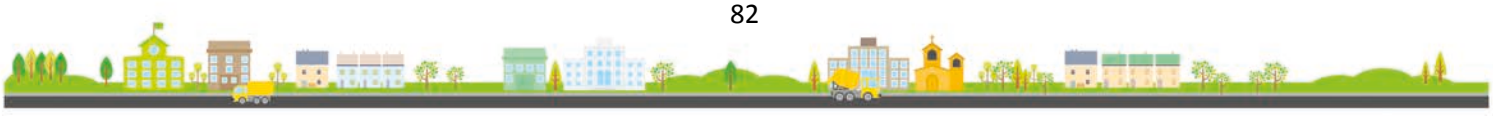
Smaller developments that cannot support onsite provision of educational facilities should contribute towards offsite education provision through developer contributions to make a development acceptable in planning terms.

The Council supports consideration of opportunities for co-location of community services and shared use facilities on school sites that offer a range of facilities wider than the educational function. Educational facilities shall be encouraged to diversify to provide a wider range of services to benefit the whole community, such as sports facilities or community centres open to the public.

Further & Higher Education

The council supports the retention and development of the further and higher education provision in Medway, and consolidation of the 'learning quarter' at Chatham Maritime. It welcomes opportunities to secure higher value jobs in Medway's economy through links with education and training providers.

In planning for the area's housing needs, the council will recognise the need for student accommodation and services.



Community Facilities

10.11 Community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, such as village halls and community centres, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship form part of social infrastructure. They brings people together, build cohesive and healthy communities, and help to create attractive places to live. They provide a focus for community life, and are integral to sustainable development.

10.12 The council recognises the importance of community facilities in towns, neighbourhoods and villages. These facilities, especially halls, were identified in the Issues and Options consultation as vitally important to local communities.

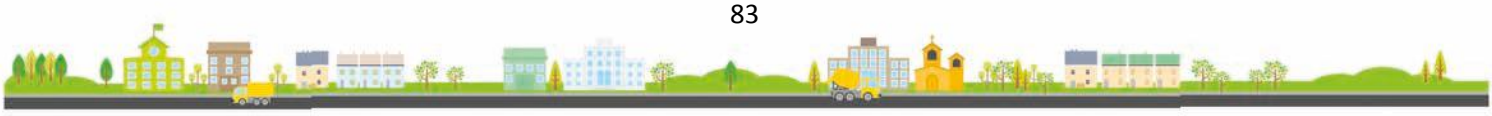
10.13 As Medway's population grows and changes, it is essential there is a strong network of community facilities to support social activities and interactions. For many residents, including older people and young families, having local facilities that are easy to reach is particularly important to retain a good quality of life, and health and wellbeing. New and growing communities within Medway, such as students and people from minority and ethnic backgrounds may have specific interests that need to be addressed in planning the provision of community facilities, including places of worship.

10.14 Some of the existing facilities, such as halls, are ageing and community groups can struggle to maintain and improve quality standards.. Communities have an option to request designation of a key local facility as an Asset of Community Value to provide additional protection against its loss.

10.15 Around 12% of Medway's population lives in the rural area. The council recognises that rural communities are particularly vulnerable to the loss of community facilities. Trends in recent years have seen the closure of rural pubs, post offices and shops. Villages without a shop or a place for people to meet can become unsustainable. The council has undertaken a village infrastructure audit in conjunction with parish councils to identify the range and condition of services, such as village shops, halls, and parks in Medway's rural area, and how these met the needs of local communities. Hoo St Werburgh as the largest village in Medway has a wide range of facilities, and provides a service centre role for the wider peninsula. Overall the condition of most rural services was average to good. The council will continue to work with parish councils in identifying and planning for the needs of rural areas, and together with the information in the village infrastructure audit this will inform the approach to planning for rural services and facilities in the new Local Plan.

10.16 The council has also gathered evidence on how well urban communities are served by local facilities. Many of these facilities are located in the town centres, but there is a wider network of social infrastructure in neighbourhoods across the urban and suburban areas, often located in district and local centres. In planning for town and local centres across Medway, the Local Plan will consider the need to secure a range of community facilities.

10.17 Much of the growth planned for Medway over the plan period is likely to be located in large developments that extend or establish neighbourhoods, towns or villages. The council will expect the provision of community facilities to be integral to the planning



of large developments, so that residents can easily access a range of services, supporting community life. Large scale housing development without adequate provision of community facilities will not be acceptable.

Policy Approach: Community Facilities

The council recognises the importance of community facilities as a key component of sustainable development. There is a presumption against the loss of community facilities in rural and urban areas.

Proposals that involve the loss of a community facility will be required to evidence why its retention is no longer needed or viable.

The council will support appropriate development that seeks to enhance community facilities, that does not have a negative impact on the surrounding amenity, historic and natural environment and transport networks.

The council will require provision to be made for community facilities in planning for new development. Large scale residential developments will be required to provide community facilities to meet the needs of new residents and seek opportunities to support integration with existing communities.

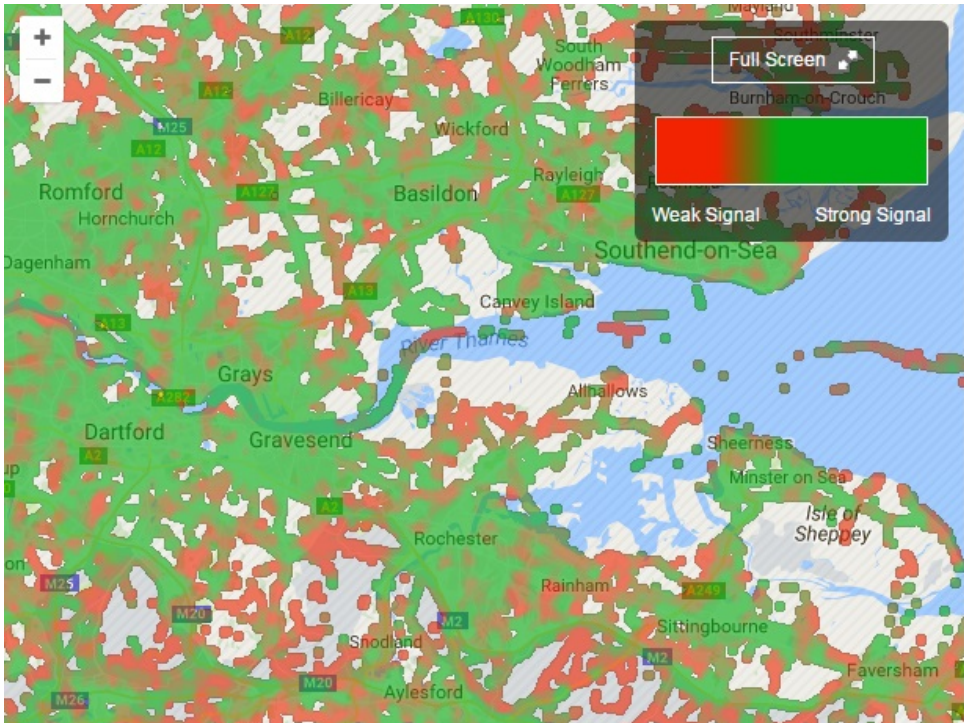
If the development is smaller scale and community facilities cannot be accommodated on site, a contribution will be sought to upgrade appropriate facilities off site, where it can be demonstrated that they are accessible to residents of the new development and that there is capacity for the increased population.

Communications Technology

10.18 Telecommunications are intrinsic to how we now live and work. Access to good broadband and telephone services are essential for business, learning and communities, and provision of high speed broadband services is a key component of a successful economy. The council seeks to establish Medway as a well-connected digital city that offers a competitive base for businesses and excellent telecommunications services for residents.

10.19 As part of this ambition, the council is working with Kent County Council in the Broadband Development UK (BDUK) programme, supported by Government, to boost the quality of broadband services in areas of market failure. As technology evolves and demands and expectations of business and community users rise, it is important to continue to invest in improvements in broadband and mobile phone infrastructure. The provision of highspeed broadband services is an expectation of new developments, but sometimes fails to be planned adequately into the delivery of schemes.

10.20 The Ofcom mobile coverage maps show that there is generally good mobile phone coverage for voice calls and mobile internet across Medway. However the picture is more varied in relation to 3G and 4G service. Mobile internet services are limited outdoors in rural areas, especially 4G, and indoor coverage will be worse.



Combined mobile phone coverage (2G, 3G & 4G), Which.co.uk

Policy Approach: Communications Infrastructure

Managing Existing & New Broadband Infrastructure

In order for Medway to achieve its economic and social potential and maintain its status as a well-connected place to live and work, the Council will seek to develop and enhance the provision of broadband infrastructure coverage across Medway.

New developments (both residential and commercial) across Medway shall be required to have access to superfast broadband upfront rather than retrospectively. If it is demonstrated that new broadband infrastructure cannot be built into a new developments, a contribution shall be required to upgrade the existing broadband network.

Open Space & Sport

10.21 Green spaces & sports facilities are intrinsic to healthy and attractive places, and national planning policy seeks to protect against the loss of these assets. As the population grows, and ages, it is imperative that people can enjoy green spaces that are within easy reach. This goes to the heart of the council's wider ambitions for Medway. Green spaces and links are important for children's play and development, support healthy lifestyles that can redress the inequalities seen in the population's life expectancy and quality of life, provide breathing spaces and stepping stones for nature, and help form the character of the local area.

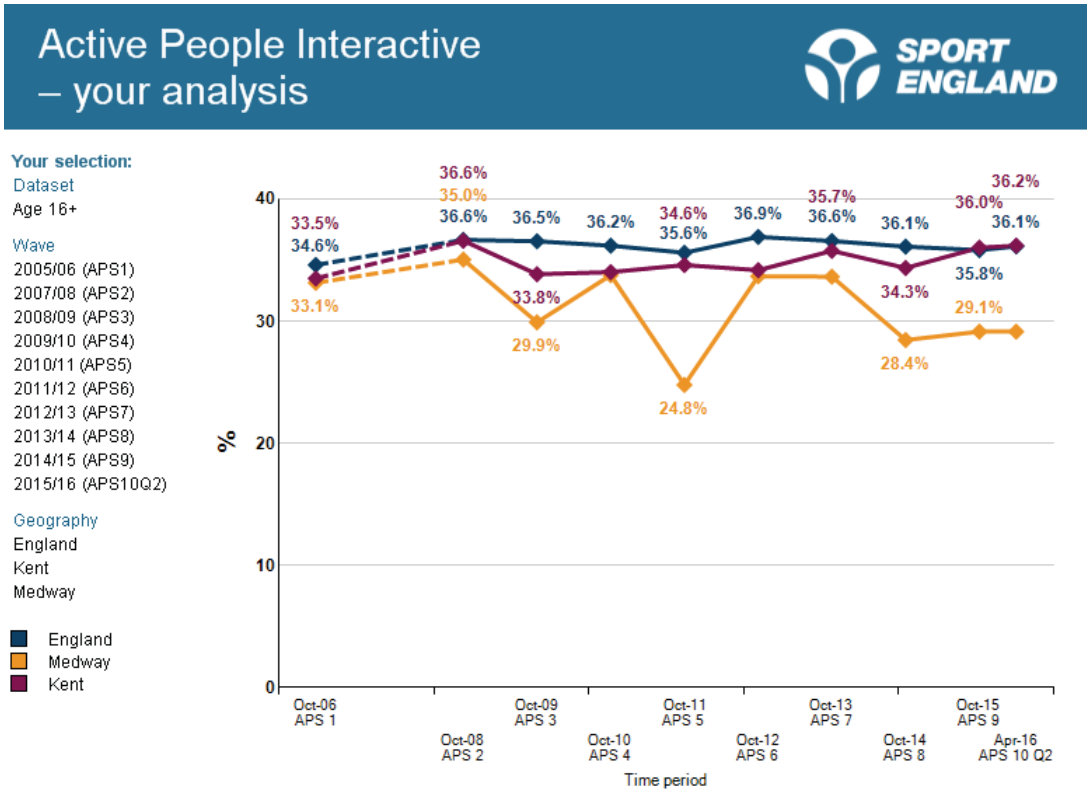
10.22 Open space offers many benefits for health, tourism, wildlife and place-making. Medway has a significant amount of open space within a diverse estate of 1,900ha. This includes country parks, allotments, play areas, formal parks and gardens and outdoor sports pitches. However there are shortfalls in the provision of allotments, outdoor sport and play areas as recorded in the Open Space PPG17 Study 2012.

10.23 Responses to Issues and Options consultation supported the retention of current open space and sports facilities and supported additional provision through new developments. It was felt there is potential to make better use of these assets as multi-functional spaces with more active community involvement.

10.24 Sport can contribute to positive place-making and supporting healthy lifestyles. There is a strong presence of sporting venues and hubs in Medway, and there has been a large investment in sports centres over recent years. The area has also hosted a number of major sporting events. The council's strategies for sports development promote greater participation rates, including special events, investments in facilities, improved cycle infrastructure, and development of a park sports programme.

10.25 Gillingham Football Club was established in 1893 and is based at Priestfield Stadium, Gillingham with a capacity of around 11,000. The stadium is within 0.5 miles of Gillingham Railway Station and is located in a predominantly residential area. The club has aspirations to upgrade its stadium and has actively been contemplating moving from its Priestfield site, developing this site for housing. The club has made representations to the council as part of the Local Plan process, promoting its interest to develop a new site at Mill Hill, Gillingham, that would involve a major new stadium supported by wider leisure, retail and residential development.

10.26 In Medway participation in sport is generally lower than the Kent and England averages. However it has broadly followed trends illustrated in the wider areas.



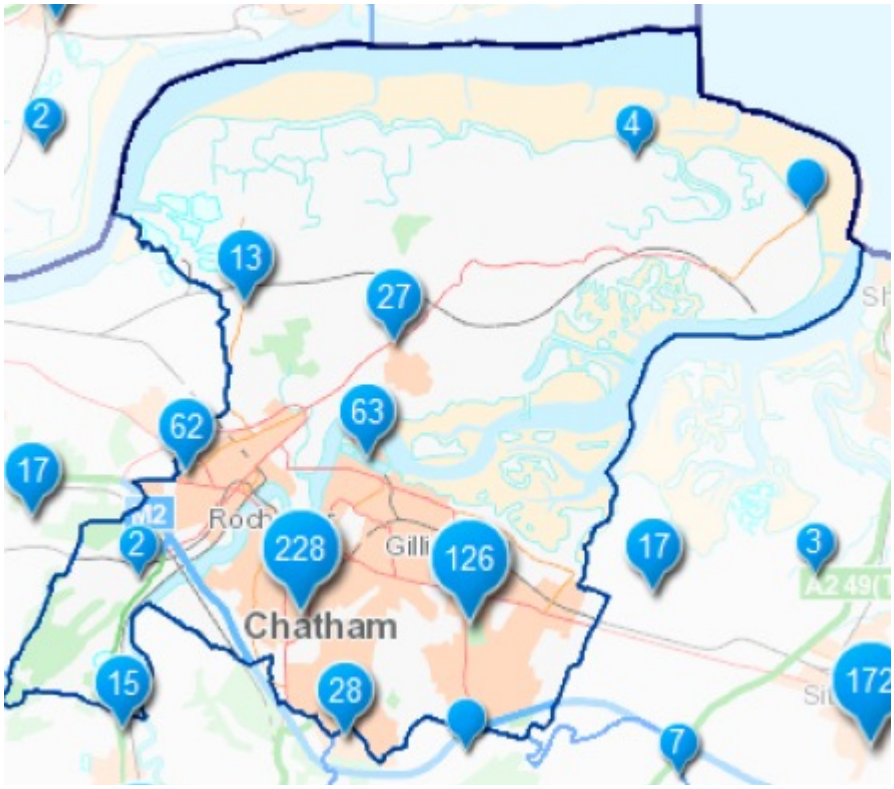
10.27 In 2015 Sport England undertook a survey *'Active Places Power. Measure: Number of sports facilities by facility type'* this shows that Medway provides 426 different sports facilities within the authority. The survey also illustrated the significant role, regionally, that Medway provides in the provision of less mainstream sports, such as ice skating and skiing.

Facilities	Medway	South East	% Region
Athletics Tracks	2	57	3.5 %
Golf	6	688	0.9 %
Grass Pitches	225	12,995	1.7 %
Health and Fitness Suite	27	1,162	2.3 %
Ice Rinks	1	8	12.5 %
Indoor Bowls	2	66	3.0 %
Indoor Tennis Centre	0	74	0.0 %
Ski Slopes	2	36	5.6 %
Sports Hall	53	1,964	2.7 %
Squash Courts	17	951	1.8 %
Studio	22	1,024	2.1 %
Swimming Pool	24	1,130	2.1 %

Facilities	Medway	South East	% Region
Artificial Grass Pitch	25	808	3.1 %
Tennis Courts	20	2,612	0.8 %
Total	426	23,575	1.8 %

Source: Active Places Power. Measure: Number of sports facilities by facility type.Time period(s): 2015

10.28 Within Medway the geographical spread of facilities is focused towards the main urban areas (Strood, Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham), with the exception of golf courses. The majority of other sports provision is concentrated in Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham.



Map of Distribution of Sports Facilities Across Medway (Sport England, 2016)

10.29 There was consensus in the responses to the Issues and Options consultation that new sports provision is needed and that Gillingham FC should be supported to find a location for a new stadium.

Policy Approach : Open Space & Sports Facilities

Existing Open Space

Existing open spaces shall be protected from loss, unless an improved provision can be made by new development to the benefit of the local population.

The network of green spaces will be protected and expanded where there are identified deficits, and poor quality open space enhanced. Opportunities to make open space multifunctional should be explored. This allows people to access a full range of open spaces, including opportunities to grow food, to help maintain and improve health and well-being.

New Open Spaces

New developments shall be required to include on-site open space provision or to contribute towards off site provision based on the size of the development. Provision shall be multifunctional based on the requirements for the area in which the open space is proposed.

The council will seek the development of management models for new open spaces that increase stakeholder development in the ongoing operation of local green spaces.

The council will seek to work with local communities to designate Local Green Spaces.

Sports Provision

The council will seek to secure and promote access to sports facilities. New development will be required to assess the ability for provision of new sports facilities on site or, if agreed as appropriate by the council, an offsite contribution made towards sport facilities.

The council will seek to address geographical shortfalls in access to sporting facilities across the authority. Where appropriate, opportunities to locate new facilities within or adjacent to centres (district or local) will be encouraged.

Existing sports uses shall be protected from loss. A change shall only be permitted where:

- It is a redevelopment that will replicate or improve the existing level of provision;
- It is evidenced that existing provision is unviable;
- It is identified that there is an existing overprovision of the specific offer and lack of need in the local community.

Gillingham Football Club

The Council will work alongside Gillingham FC to develop an appropriate strategy to secure the club's future development in Medway.

Utilities

10.30 Utilities such as water, energy and sewage are vital to enable development to be sustainable and function effectively.

10.31 Planning policy must assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure in considering the needs and impacts of development. The council's work on an infrastructure delivery schedule has reviewed strategic planning documents of utility providers and this has not yet identified any capacity issues relating to the electricity and gas networks.

10.32 However, Medway is within an area of water stress, and some capacity issues have been identified.[16] Southern Water is the provider of water and waste water services within Medway and has identified that supply is balanced in the early part of the plan period but there is a need towards the later period. [17]

10.33 With the level of growth projected in Medway, the capacity in these networks will likely change over time. Capacity will need to either be built in to the system through expansion of facilities or efficiencies made in the system to allow for spare capacity to be developed.

10.34 The council will continue to work with utilities providers to share information on planned levels and locations of growth to assess the capacity of systems to meet increased needs, and to identify any upgrades required, or where limits on development need to be considered.

Policy Approach : Utilities

Any new development is to be supported by the requisite utilities infrastructure.
Significant new development proposals shall be assessed as to the impact on the existing network (water, electricity and gas). Any developers that would create a level of pressure that could not be accommodated within the existing capacity will be expected to contribute towards new infrastructure through the developer contributions mechanism.

Implementation & Delivery

10.35 The Local Plan needs to be deliverable in order to successfully achieve the vision and strategic objectives set for Medway's growth. In developing the strategy and producing policies for the new Local Plan, the council must have regard to viability, the impact of policy direction, level of developer contributions, planning conditions and monitoring and review.

10.36 The responses to the Issues and Options consultation indicated that there should be a geographical spread in relation to affordable housing and developer contributions,

[16] Environment Agency, Water Stressed Areas (2013)
[17] Southern Water, Water Resources Management Plan 2015-40

and that infrastructure should be delivered alongside development and in conjunction with communities.

10.37 The council has undertaken an initial viability study to assess an appropriate proportion for affordable housing contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy charging levels. Further work will be carried out to determine an appropriate approach in the draft Local Plan, based on an assessment of the viability of the preferred development strategy, which will identify the locations, scale and mix of development across Medway. The council will also respond to any updated Government guidance on developer contributions, planning conditions, and approaches to viability testing. The council aims to achieve quality development that fairly contributes to meeting the needs of residents and avoids or mitigates any negative impacts, but does not place unacceptable demands on developers that cannot be delivered.

Policy Approach: Implementation and Delivery

Developer Contributions

To make development acceptable and enable the granting of planning permission, inadequacies in infrastructure arising from proposed development should be mitigated through Developer Contributions. This can be achieved by several methods including S.106 Agreements, Unilateral Undertakings or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

S.106 Planning Obligations via a legal agreement will be sought where they meet the statutory tests:

- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- directly related to the development; and
- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

The council will consider pursuing the development of a Community Infrastructure Levy charge, informed by further Government policy on this matter.

Ensuring the Viability of Development

New significant development shall be required to demonstrate the viability of their proposals and this needs to be market tested to ascertain that it can withstand a reasonable level of market change.

Imposition of Conditions

Planning conditions shall be attached to planning permissions in order to make a development acceptable.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan

The council will prepare an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, monitor and report on progress in the Authority Monitoring Report, and identify the need for review where appropriate.

Monitoring and Review

Infrastructure is essential to the effective functioning of development. The council will engage positively with developers where unpredicted issues affect viability of consented schemes, in order to consider acceptable strategies for meeting infrastructure needs.